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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 191652

EXDIS TOSEC 71

FOLLOWING REPEAT PEKING 1133 ACTION SECSTATE INFO TAIPEI
TOKYO OTTAWA HONG KONG 26 SEPT

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1133

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. RONNING FOUND CHOU EN-LAI LIVELY BUT IN WORSE HEALTH THAN LAST MEETING, TUNG PI-WU LESS SATISFIED WITH U.S. DEEDS THAN WORDS, AND SZECHUAN PROVINCE GREATLY CHANGED IN 25 YEARS. END SUMMARY.

2. ON SEPTEMBER 25 USLO OFFICER SPENT SEVERAL HOURS WITH RETIRED CANADIAN DIPLOMAT CHESTER RONNING AND HIS DAUGHTER AUDREY (MRS. SEYMOUR) TOPPING. THEY ARRIVED IN PEKING AFTER VISITING KWEILIN, CHENGTU, AND CHUNGKING, AND ON EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 24 WERE DINNER GUESTS OF CHOU EN-LAI. ON FOLLOWING AFTERNOON, THEY HAD LENGTHY INTERVIEW WITH TUNG PI-WU, WHO RONNING DESCRIBED AS AN CONFIDENTIAL

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OLD FRIEND. ALTHOUGH MOST OF RONNING'S COMMENTS WERE PURELY PERSONAL REMINISCENCES, FOLLOWING POINTS WERE OF INTEREST.

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3. CHOU EN-LAI - RONNING PREVIOUSLY HAD SEEN CHOU IN 1972, AND COMMENTED ON THIS OCCASION, "I DIDN'T LIKE HIS COLOR". HE NOTED CHOU'S EYES LACKED CUSTOMARY SPARKLE AND DARK BLOTCHES ON HIS FACE APPEARED MORE PRONOUNCED THAN IN PREVIOUS MEETINGS. HE NOTED THAT CHOU TOOK SEVERAL SMALL BLACK PILLS AFTER DINNER, AND WHEN RONNING COMMENTED HE HAD WALKED SIX MILES ON O MEI MOUNTAIN, CHOU SAID HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPANY HIM ON THAT TRIP. WHEN RONNING MENTIONED POSSIBLE VISIT TO LHASA IN THE FUTURE, CHOU SAID HE WOULD BE UNABLE TO ACCOMPANY HIM WITHOUT DOCTOR'S PERMISSION. RONNING ASSUMES CHOU SUFFERING FROM HEART CONDITION. NEVERTHELESS, BANQUET LASTED FOUR-AND-A-HALF HOURS, BREAKING UP AT MIDNIGHT ON RONNING'S INIAIATIVE. CHOU ALSO DEMONSTRATED HIS FORMIDABLE COMMAND OF EVEN THE MOST MINUTE DETAIL WHEN HE REVEALED THAT HE HAD ARRANGED FOR THE DINNER TO BE HELD IN THE HUPEI ROOM OF GREAT HALL OF THE PEOPLE SINCE HUPEI WAS RONNING'S BIRTHPLACE, HAD DISCOVERED THE GREAT HALL HAD NO HUPEI COOK AND HAD FOUND ONE, AND FINALLY ARRANGED FOR ALL HUPEI DISHES TO BE SERVED.

4. TUNG PI-WU - RONNING FOUND TUNG IN GOOD SHAPE AND FULLY ALERT DURING HIS CONVERSATION WITH HIM. ASKED ABOUT THE STATE OF SINO-U.S. RELATIONS, TUNG SAID CHINESE WERE "VERY SATISFIED WITH THE WORDS", I.E., LANGUAGE OF SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE AND OTHER U.S. PRONOUNCEMENTS, BUT "WERE LESS SATISFIED WITH THE ACTIONS". RONNING SAID HE FELT TUNG WAS REFERRING TO TAIWAN QUESTION.

5. EDUCATED YOUTH TO THE COUNTRYSIDE - RONNING SAID CHOU SPOKE AT LENGTH ON THE NECESSITY FOR EDUCATED YOUTH TO SPEND TWO YEARS WORKING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE BEFORE ENTERING COLLEGE, AN APPROACH WITH WHICH RONNING FULLY AGREES. CHOU SAID PROGRAM HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THERE HAD BEEN SOME DIFFICULTIES. HE DESCRIBED EARLY REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD WHEN HE AND CONFIDENTIAL

OTHERS WERE GROPING FOR CORRECT IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION, AND SAID HE FELT AMERICAN YOUTH NOW RPT NOW GOING THROUGH SIMILAR PERIOD. HE SAID CHINESE EDUCATIONAL REFORM GOING THROUGH SIMILAR TRIAL AND ERROR PERIOD. MISTAKES WOULD BE MADE, BUT GENERAL DIRECTION IN WHICH THEY WERE MOVING WAS CORRECT.

6. SZECHUAN - RONNING WAS RETURNING TO SZECHUAN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER TWENTY FIVE YEARS AND WAS TREMENDOUSLY IMPRESSED WITH WHAT HE SAW. HE SAID HE WOULD SCARCELY HAVE RECOGNIZED CHUNGKING, AND NEW INDUSTRY LINED THE ROUTE DOWN THE YANGTZE RIVER. AT I CHANG (HUPEI) HE OBSERVED NEW BRIDGE ACROSS YANGTZE WHICH TUNG PI-WU TOLD HIM EVEN

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HE HAD NOT YET HEARD ABOUT. RONNING WAS ALSO IMPRESSED WITH CARE BEING DEVOTED TO RESTORATION OF HISTORICAL SITES SUCH AS O MEI MOUNTAIN. ASKED ABOUT SIGNS OF TENSION IN SZECHUAN, RONNING SAID HE HAD LOOKED FOR BUT FOUND NO SIGNS OF TENSION.

7. TRAVEL IN CHINA -RONNING SAID HE ASKED CHOU ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT TO LHASA AND WAS TOLD "PERHAPS NEXT YEAR". IN KWEILIN HE OBSERVED CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW TOURIST HOTEL FOR FOREIGNERS, AND SAID HE THOUGHT CHINA MIGHT SOON OPEN UP WIDER TRAVEL FOR FOREIGNERS. RONNING WILL BE IN PEKING FOR NATIONAL DAY AND WILL THEN PROCEED TO INNER MONGOLIA WHERE CHOU TOLD HIM HE CAN SEE ANYTHING HE LIKES.
BRUCE UNQUOTE RUSH

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